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IMPLICATIONS OF GANDHI'S FAST FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

The most critical front of psychological warfare in the Orient at present is in India and consists of the circumstances of Gandhi's fast. To the Indian, a fast to obtain redress of a grievance is not bluff or "political blackmail," as Lord Linlithgow calls it, but a legitimate type of social pressure, known in Indian literature for 2,500 years, and just as valid in its ethical basis as an appeal to a court of law. It is a solemn declaration to God and to man that the one fasting is so sure his complaint is just that he will sacrifice his life. In the opinion of Hindus, if he dies while fasting the sin of causing his death is a murder committed by the person refusing redress. If Gandhi dies in the present fast, Hindus will hold the British Government, the Government of India, Lord Linlithgow, and all who might have helped repair the injustice, responsible for his death. The people themselves will not feel it necessary to appraise all the issues and adjudicate them; Gandhi's death will be sufficient to show that he was right. Neither will they think that he was an irresponsible, eccentric, arbitrary, or unreasoning person who used so drastic a form of pressure without due reflection and cause. They have long been convinced of Gandhi's fundamental saintliness, moderation, and intelligence. They will have no doubt that he was right.

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To a lesser extent, but nevertheless strongly, this feeling will be shared by the Muslims, partly because they know the Hindu belief and are sympathetic to it, partly because they will be convinced that there must be substance in a cause for which a man will deliberately lay down his life.

It is significant in this connection that the Indian parties, except the Muslim League, have united to demand Gandhi's release and even the Muslims are taking a grave view of the situation.

If Gandhi should die, the Indian response is certain to be one of enhanced bitterness and antipathy toward the British. In large measure the obloquy will fall upon Americans too. Our protestations concerning the justice of our war with Germany and Japan will be subjected to even more severe strictures than those of the past. Whatever hope we may have had that India would give whole-hearted support to the war effort will be dissipated. Already the intransigence of Lord Linlithgow and the British War Cabinet is taken in India to confirm the suspicion, frequently voiced, that Britain and America are fighting an imperialist war. As the President's personal representative in India has just pointed out, public opinion in India is receptive to the idea that we and the United Kingdom form a white color bloc against the dark-skinned Orientals.

Physical political disorders would follow Gandhi's death. These might not be as great as those of last August and September,

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and they might be checked with the use of the police and military forces present in India. They might, however, be far greater, because expressing the resentment of millions of the illiterate who did not understand the abstract issues of last summer, but have a deep affection and reverence for Gandhi hardly less than the devotion paid to a deity. The mildest form of popular resentment would permit a sullen toleration of India's present war effort. The strongest form would lead to disruption of communications and industry. In any case the Indian army will be affected. Its zest for war will be impaired. Let us hope the result will not be a refusal to fight or sporadic or general mutiny.

Throughout the rest of Asia the professions of the Four Freedoms as United Nations war aims will be the object of general contumely. The accusations of Japanese propaganda against us will seem to many Asiatics to have been dramatically and conclusively proven. In Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Indo-China, the Netherlands East Indies, which we propose to save from Japan, Japanese agents will be presented with a powerful weapon. Many of the people of those countries who have had confidence in us will lose it. The old suspicions of Britain will seem confirmed. America will share the same odium.

In the Near East, where nationalism is powerful and often regards Britain as its chief opponent, the cause of democracy will suffer serious defeat. Britain and America will be -- are even now being -- charged with hypocrisy and base motives

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for post-war adjustment. The sentiments which we have tried so patiently to foster there in our behalf will be put under strain. Turkey and Egypt are especially friendly to the Indian National Congress; they will not be unaffected by the blow of Gandhi's death.

China has made it clear in countless ways that her sympathy is with Indian nationalism. Her present discouragement because of our inability to get supplies to her will be supplemented by disappointment that we have struck down democracy in India as China understands it there.

The death of Gandhi will be a colossal psychological defeat for the United Nations throughout the Orient. It will correspondingly be a major psychological aid to the Germans and the Japanese. All our own professions will appear to the Orient to have been repudiated, all the Japanese charges against us confirmed.

The only resource still available to the United Nations is to release Gandhi and the other Congress prisoners unconditionally and at once. Though we cannot foresee the turn of events after his release, the country is sure to be in a less inflamed condition than if he dies in detention. Gandhi and the Congress are anti-Japanese. We will still have the opportunity to win them and India to our aid. It should not be thought that Gandhi's death would lead to a breaking up of Congress. For some months it would certainly strengthen the Congress resistance

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and might win the support of other Indian parties. Those months would provide the time in which to do tremendous damage to the war effort.

If there is any way to release the Congress prisoners and still save British face in India, that way should be employed. If no such way can be found, the prisoners should still be released. British face or mere British interests are not the only [illegible]. The matter concerns the entire United Nations war program. To win we want the fighting goodwill of the Orient. If we sacrifice Gandhi, we lose the goodwill of India, and with India of the Orient as well. We shall never again be able to convince the Orient that we are fighting for freedom.

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February 23, 1943

ROUTE TO:	IN	OUT
Mr. Mason		
Mr. McKay		
Mr. Wiley		
Mr. Hoover		
Mr. Despres		
Mr. Hartshorne		
Mr. Read		

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SUBJECT: Implications of Gandhi's Fast for Psychological Warfare - prepared by Dr. Norman Brown, Feb. 22, 1943.

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